SPLITTING A LARGER PIE: A SIMULATION OF THE EFFECTS OF COMPULSORY VOTING ON THE 2009 ROMANIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OUTCOME

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Abstract

This study assesses the effectiveness of compulsory voting in achieving better representation of the preferences of all social groups. I focus my analysis on the 2009 Romanian presidential elections. To begin with, I compare voters and non-voters in terms of socio-demographic characteristics and democratic attitudes, in order to assess whether or not there are significant differences between the groups and thus whether or not voters are a representative sample of the electorate. I find that there are indeed socio-demographic differences between voters and non-voters. In addition, voters are more interested and engaged in politics. On the contrary, the differences in democratic attitudes are not significant and therefore I conclude that, in this respect, voters are representative of the entire electorate. However, this can also be interpreted by arguing that, unlike the beliefs of some, bringing non-voters to the ballots would not cause threats to democracy. Next, since the main effect of compulsory voting is increased turnout, I compute a predictive model of the non-voters' candidate preferences and simulate the election outcome with full turnout. In the first round, although the voters' candidate ordering is different from the non-voters', the simulated outcome of the election does not differ significantly. In the second round, the findings are biased by the inaccuracy of the data in predicting the actual election outcome and thus, although the simulated outcome is significantly different from the actual election outcome, I refrain from interpreting the results as an argument in favor of the existence of turnout effect. I conclude that, since non-voters have different preferences than voters, if full representation of preferences is a goal, compulsory voting could be a viable solution.

Key words: elections**,** compulsory voting, Romania, turnout effects.

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Introduction

The constant tendency of election turnouts to decrease is considered one of the main problems of modern democracies and may lead some to question the veracity of the main assumption behind democratic representation. The rationale of voting is the belief in the principle that governments should represent the interests of citizens from all walks of life. However, low participation in elections severely challenges the legitimacy possessed by governments. When a party wins little over 50% of the expressed votes in an election, it will most likely be able to form the government by itself, even though only half the population is represented this way. Such an occurrence may still displease some, but let us add to this the premise that less than 40% of the population actually go to vote and express their preferences. Consequently, the party that will singlehandedly control policy over the next few years is supported by about 20% of the population. Can we still claim that this hypothetical newly elected government enjoys legitimacy?

However, several states, such as Luxembourg or Australia have attempted to overcome this challenge to legitimacy by implementing compulsory voting by which, briefly put, citizens who refuse to comply to their civic duty to vote are compelled to pay a moderate fine. If the goal of this measure is considered to be an increased turnout, this institutional setting has been quite successful in this respect, as in countries where compulsory voting has been implemented participation rates have increased by 5 to 48% (Birch 2009: 82).

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Nevertheless, can compulsory voting achieve anything besides an increased turnout and actually alter election results by artificially creating better representation for all social groups? Scholars argue that the effects of compulsory voting go beyond the increase of turnout. Studies revealed that a low turnout does not imply that a random sample of the population vote, but that some groups are underrepresented, and thus the outcome of the election is distorted. It is thus believed that, since people with low income and education levels are less likely to vote in normal circumstances, compulsory voting would favor left-wing parties. Furthermore, since non-voters are less likely to have high levels of political information, compulsory voting is expected to hinder the chances of small parties, with fewer campaign resources, to make themselves known to the electorate and get elected into parliament (Lever 2010).

Briefly put, if compulsory voting is indeed a justifiable institution, effective in achieving the goal of creating a better representation of all social groups, there are several issues that must be solved. Thus, by analyzing in depth the 2009 Romanian presidential election, in this study I set out to answer the following questions:

1. *Is the group of non-voters is indeed different from the group of voters with regard to demographics and the distribution of political attitudes?*

2. *Would high turnout produce significant changes in the vote shares of the candidates that compete in elections?*

Unfortunately, performing such an endeavor can be a difficult task to properly achieve. Comparing outcomes of distinct elections with different turnout rates (such as European Parliament elections, which usually gain little attention from the public and thus display low participatory rates, and parliamentary ones) could give a hint of what happens when only "die-

hard" partisans vote in comparison to an election where mainstream voters join them, but turnout can hardly be considered an exogenous variable in this case. It is easy to see how various circumstantial factors may affect voter preferences between the two electoral events. In addition, although a natural experiment setting would probably be the ideal situation in which turnout effects could be examined (i.e. implementing compulsory voting in only some administrative regions of one country), to my knowledge, no such circumstance has occurred.

Therefore, in spite of the fact that, as I will point out later in this paper, this method has its own drawbacks, I assert that the only feasible way to analyze the effect of increased turnout is using extracting from survey data variables of socio-demographic participatory and attitudinal nature in order to estimate the respondents' probability to vote for each party. Next, the candidate preference distribution of self-reported voters will be compared to the non-voter distribution of preferences and to the simulated full turnout.

However, before I proceed with the analysis, one important limitation of this study should be pointed out. Even though my goal here is to evaluate the effectiveness of compulsory voting in producing better representation for all social groups, one aspect cannot be captured in this analysis: the effect of the implementation itself of this institutional setting. I consider it beyond my means to predict to what extent some people's rejection of a law that coerces them to vote or others' approval of an act that is meant to stimulate civic participation can alter party preferences or even determine a significant number of them to spoil their vote. Thus, the setting that will be simulated in this paper will assume valid ballots, in a polity where compulsory voting is long-standing and therefore cannot be considered an external shock. In addition, since there is no theoretically justifiable means to assess people's probability to abstain under compulsory voting rules, I will assume full turnout. Although, admittedly, such an occurrence is extremely unlikely

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in real life, this shortcoming will not hinder the attempt to highlight the differences between voters and non-voters in terms of candidate choice.

All this being stated, I can only move on to the main body of this study. To begin with, I analyze some of the main arguments in favor or in opposition to compulsory voting, concluding that the only tenable argument in its favor is the assertion that, as compulsory voting raises turnout, more people who usually do not vote will be brought to the ballots, this institutional setting thus contributing to a better representation of all social groups. Therefore, what follows is the need to test this hypothesis. Next, I review what are, to the best of my knowledge, the most relevant studies that focused on turnout effects on election outcomes. I focus on both empirical studies, showing turnout effects on party vote shares or the effect of compulsory voting in countries where it is already implemented, but I also discuss studies with a goal similar to mine, assessing the methodologies used and discussing the findings. Then, I proceed with the empirical analysis. I start by giving detailed accounts of the data and methodology I use. Next, I move on to the findings, pointing out their implications, but also the shortcomings of this study. What my study shows is that, although there is no clear-cut evidence that the winner of the election studied would have changed, differences in preference orderings do exist between voters and non-voters, pointing out that the voters' do not accurately represent the full electorate and therefore compulsory voting could solve this problem.

Chapter 1 Why (Not) Compulsory Voting

Although voting is one of the aspect of political life in which citizen participation displays one of the lowest inequality in comparison to others, the problem of low and unequal turnout still remains a challenge to representative democracy (Lijphart 1997). Not only does low participation in elections guarantee a smaller degree of legitimacy for the elected government, but it also raises several other issues of normative and consequential nature.

Firstly, if a democratic political system is to be considered a public good, the act of voting can be understood as cooperation in the collective action that aims to preserve and improve it. Consequently, non-voters are free-riders that try to elude their civic duty by non-participating (Lever 2010), thus avoiding the moral obligation to effectively participate as citizens to the act of governance.

Secondly, low turnout generates unequal representation of various social groups, as the voters can seldom be seen as a random sample of the population that enjoys voting rights. Contrarily to the initial assumptions of scholars contemporary to the implementation of universal suffrage, it is usually not the rich and educated that rationally abstain from voting due to their awareness of the fact that a single vote has infinitesimal probability to make a difference, but the poor and uneducated who show up on election day less often (Lijphart 1997). Thus, election results are biased and the interests of the upper class, who already benefit from their economic advantage, are overrepresented.

In order to solve the low turnout problem in elections Lijphart (1997) mentions several institutional arrangements that could have a positive effect. *Friendly registration rules*, for instance, could make the generic voter to see the act of voting as less costly, and thus be more

willing to go to the polls. Secondly, ***proportional election formulas*** discourage the perception of wasted votes, since even parties that are preferred only by a small percentage of the voters can get into parliament and can thus represent the interests of their supporters. Thirdly, ***infrequent elections*** will keep the importance of voting from dropping in the eyes of citizens, who will thus find their action to be less trivial as it otherwise may be believed to be. Finally, ***scheduling elections on weekends*** ensures that citizens are available on that time and can thus take part in the electoral proves without having to give up on more lucrative activities. However, what the Dutch scholar deems to be the most effective means of raising turnout is ***compulsory voting.***

Nevertheless, before proceeding with the analysis of the theoretical and empirical arguments for and against compulsory voting, the definition of this concept should be clarified since, as it will be more obvious in this section, the validity of some claims that are made against this institution depends on a good understanding of what compulsory voting really is. Thus, compulsory voting should be considered to be "*a system of laws and/or norms mandating that enfranchised citizens turn out to vote, often accompanied by (a) a system of compulsory voter registration and (b) penalties for non-compliance, usually fines or the denial of state-provided benefits*". (Jackman 2001) Therefore, it should be noted that what is mandatory for citizens is not the act of voting in itself, but to show up at the polls, while spoiling the vote or not depositing it into the ballot box remain optional.

1.1 Compulsory Voting: The Pros

Needless to say, unlike the debatable issue of the civic duty to vote, one of the most relevant arguments in favor of compulsory voting is the fact that it stimulates participation and it is probably the only argument with which its opponents find it hard to disagree with. It cannot be

denied that turnouts have significantly increased in countries that implemented compulsory voting and has decreased if compulsory voting was abolished (Hill, Leighley et al. 1995; Lijphart 1997; Lever 2010).

In addition, by raising turnout, compulsory voting can ensure a more equal representation of the different social groups existent in society. Even though in countries such as Great Britain age can turn out to be a better predictor of the propensity to vote than education or income (Lever 2010), in most cases there is a significant discrepancy between voters and non-voters when it comes to the latter two (Lijphart 1997). It can be argued that although the right to participate is highly relevant when it comes to evaluating the quality of a democracy, what really has an impact on policy is the degree in which citizens take advantage of that right and effectively participate in the governance of the polity, and empirical data shows that this assertion is defendable: income inequality is significantly lower if the level of political participation is higher (Mueller and Stratmann 2002).

Furthermore, one cannot neglect an aspect that has proved to be a quite serious problem in the last decades of political history. If politicians know that voting is not mandatory and a significant part of the population takes advantage of the right to not participate, they will also be aware of the fact that managing to mobilize a significant part of the non-voters to join their side may be enough to win elections. On the other hand, if all voters are required to take part in elections, campaign costs will decrease (Lijphart 1997). Furthermore, politicians will be discouraged to use illicit methods to mobilize voters such as bribes since, once the number of voters has significantly increased, the costs that would be implied by mobilizing enough voters would be appreciably higher.

Finally, a highly relevant aspect of the issue regards the possible impact that higher turnout can have on politicians themselves. Aiming to win public support in order to get (re)elected, officials will promote policies that are supported by what they believe to be the majority of the electorate. However, assuming that non-voters are indeed different from voters in several aspects, such as income and education, but also on more particular issues such as attitudes towards welfare spending, democracy or foreign policy, an increased turnout will change the politicians' priorities regarding the direction in which the government's agenda is pushed. If people who support a particular stance on an issue do not vote, candidates will have no incentives to embrace that stance themselves. On the contrary, they will respond to the preferences of the majority, leaving the non-voters' interests unrepresented. On the other hand, if turnout were increased, either due to external shocks or to government action – namely implementing compulsory voting – politicians will be compelled to address the issues that the citizens who previously abstained deem important.

However, in spite of all the quite plausible arguments in defense of compulsory voting, its popularity is far from being universal. As the next subsection will point out, several arguments, both deontological and teleological in nature, are raised against the implementation of this institutional setting.

1.2 Compulsory Voting: The Cons

To begin with, instead of seeing it as a form of free-riding, abstention from voting can also be considered a form of expressing one's opinion towards the issues at stake or the competence of the candidates that are competing for office (Franklin 1999). Thus, although the message of a non-voter may be perceived as ambiguous in some respects, it still exists and the means by

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which it is conveyed are the ones that the rational, individualist citizen has considered most appropriate to serving his best interest. Whether a citizen considers the issues debated not salient enough or whether he considers all candidates to be equally (in)competent, indifference is an opinion as valid as expressing a preference for any of the available alternatives.

Nevertheless, even if abstention is not to be considered a form of expressing one's opinion and compulsory voting can be seen as the only effective means of raising turnout, the classical argument against compulsory voting is of normative nature and owes its substance to the liberal, anti-paternalistic tradition. Briefly put, forcing people to vote would be an unjustifiable state intrusion in the sphere of individual freedom. Even if the government considers that voting is beneficial for the individual, it has no right to interfere with the latter's freedom of choice, and thus should not coerce him into participating to the electoral process (Lijphart 1997).

This argument, however, as idealistic as it may sound, can easily be rejected. While in the case of compulsory voting, the state's intrusion is minor at best, as it only compels people to be present at the polling station and not necessarily cast a valid vote, other state intrusions are generally considered acceptable in spite of the fact that they limit individual freedom to a much more considerable extent (Lijphart 1997). The state has the authority to collect taxes or to hold citizens in custody against their will, and these are only a few examples of its prerogatives that may be considered to be breaches in individual freedom and that render the intrusion that compulsory voting may create ridiculously insignificant.

Still, arguments against compulsory voting that come from a consequentialist perspective are harder to reject. To begin with, even though such an institutional setting may achieve the goal of raising turnout, it is quite easy to impute that an increased turnout may solve the problem of mass

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absenteeism, but it only cures a symptom of a disease with deeper roots. Bringing people to the polls will not make them more knowledgeable about politics, nor does it increase the salience of the issues that the main topic of the elections consists of (Franklin 1999; Engelen 2007). On the contrary, the underlying problem may be the lack of distinct alternatives due to the parties crowding of the median voter's ideological position, the inexistence of a party that covers a certain segment of the ideological specter, or even general distrust towards the political elites that have failed so far to rise to the expectations of their electorate.

Furthermore, compulsory voting may have a vital contribution to the decay of the quality of the political debate that takes place in a society, and such a mishap can take place in two steps. Firstly, as the people who generally do not vote are neither interested nor knowledgeable in politics, compulsory voting will bring to the polls a large group of less informed voters. The immediate consequence of this will be a small, but nevertheless observable increase in protest votes and invalid ballots (Keaney and Rogers 2006) and even choosing the candidate whose name appears first on the voting ballot, also called "donkey voting" (Engelen 2007).

However, what is probably the most relevant consequence of the apparition of this new group of voters is the effect on politicians. Knowing they no longer have to convince citizens to vote by emphasizing relevant policy related issue in their campaign and also considering the fact that many of the voters have limited political knowledge, politicians will most likely have incentives to give in to populism (Jackman 2001). Thus, the quality of the political debate will significantly decrease.

There are, of course, objections that can be made to this argument, as it can be seen as an attempt to discredit the 'one man, one vote' idea behind democracy, by asserting that people who are not

fully informed in matters of politics are somehow 'unworthy' to vote in elections (Engelen 2007). One does not need to know by heart every single piece of legislation that was passed in parliament during the last century and who were the representatives that backed it in order to decide which candidate to vote for in local elections. On the contrary, uninformed people are often able to vote consistently to their own interest by using information cues and shortcuts in order to select the right candidate (Lupia 1994).

Nevertheless, even all this being considered, compulsory voting is far from winning the battle against its critics. As some scholars assert, in spite of managing to increase turnout levels, it fails to achieve its second main goal: equal representation of all social groups. As I will show in the next section, researchers who have simulated the effects that increased turnout would have on election outcomes have concluded that compulsory voting would produce little or no changes to the parties' vote shares, even in cases where absenteeism is more frequent among some social groups than others. One possible explanation could be the decline of class voting and the emergence of catch-all parties that render the unequal representation of different social groups irrelevant to political outcomes.

1.3 Discussion

While both sides of the debate concerning compulsory voting display strong arguments, the facts are far from pointing to a conclusion. When arguments are based on deontological considerations, supporters of compulsory voting argue that civic participation is a duty and since citizens have the incentive to free-ride, by not doing their part in the collective action of voting, it is the state's responsibility to implement regulations that promote participation. On the other hand, opponents assert that voting is a right, not an obligation, and the right to choose one

candidate or another implies having the right not to choose either of them. Consequently, compulsory voting would be an unjustifiable infringement of individual freedom that the state should not impose upon its citizens.

While this approach to the debate leaves the issue unresolved, as both sides display valid arguments in support of their claims, a consequentialist approach takes the dilemma even further from an acceptable solution. Supporters of compulsory voting argue that, by increasing turnout, it will lead to a more equal representation of all social groups, an outcome which is not obtained under voluntary voting rules, since some face greater barriers than others keeping them away from political action. Furthermore, compulsory voting will change the manner in which politicians conduct electoral campaigns, as more emphasis will be placed on proposing policies that will attract a majority of voters than on mere mobilization. Finally, another effect of increasing turnout would be rendering vote-buying obsolete due to additional costs.

However, opponents of compulsory voting disagree on the desirability of an increased turnout. They argue that such a regulation will bring to the polls uninformed voters, who could vote contrary to their preferences due to their ignorance. Furthermore, these new voters, forced to go to the polls against their will, may vote at random or even support extremist parties in order to protest against the fact that they are forced to participate in elections. In addition, electoral campaigns will also be negatively affected, as politicians aiming to convince a less informed electorate to grant them their vote will give in to populism, thus lowering the level of political debate.

Nevertheless, the aspect most relevant to the present study is the claim that compulsory voting is ineffective in matters that concern the supposed better representation of all social groups. Studies

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have shown that changes to the vote shares of the competing parties would be minor or even negligible, and this issue is my main point of focus, as the goal of this paper is to determine whether or not this is the case.

In addition, one aspect, although less often discussed in the literature, emphasizes the role of the possible impact of compulsory voting as a weapon in political confrontations. As noted by Meguid and Helmke (2007), compulsory voting has most often been implemented following strategic calculations, as the parties who proposed and eventually implemented this institution believed they would benefit from this change. This finding suggests that this consideration, along with the issue of better representation, should be taken into account when researching the effects of compulsory voting. Therefore, before proceeding with the analysis, the next section aims to review several studies that research the impact of turnout on election outcome.

Chapter 2 Rules, Turnout and Outcomes: What Studies Can and Cannot Tell Us

While arguments in social science may often make sense from the theoretical point of view, they may as just often fall short on one vital aspect: relevance in the real world. For this reason, no argument for or against a particular institution can be considered valid without having been thoroughly tested using empirical data.

Thus, this chapter is dedicated to briefly reviewing some existent scholarly works that attempt to answer questions relevant in the debate on compulsory voting and its implications, namely the effects of an increased turnout and other possible outcomes to the occurrence of which such an institution may contribute. I will, however, put little to no emphasis on deontological arguments, leaving this take on the debate to the scholars in the discipline that 'owns' this type of arguments, namely political theory. It is not my goal here to judge whether or not compelling citizens to vote is an unjustifiable intrusion in the sphere of individual freedom, whether abstaining from voting is equivalent to defecting from one's duty as a citizen or whether it is the state's job to push people to voice their claims to the politicians by voting. I will instead focus on hard facts, namely the effects that compulsory voting rules and the subsequent increased turnout may have on election outcomes and policies.

Based on empirical and theoretical considerations, the studies discussed here often reach diverging conclusions regarding which political factions would benefit or lose from an increased turnout in elections. However, one pattern emerges: generally, if there is an effect of turnout on vote shares, it is rather small and seldom sufficiently large to change the winner of the election.

Nevertheless, turnout can sometimes have a significant effect on the policies implemented by the executive.

2.1 Higher Turnout: Who Are the New Voters

The fact that compulsory voting raises turnout is quite easy to foresee. However, what may be of interest are the characteristics these new voters may share and to what degree they differ from the regular voters. Since the question here is whether or not stimulating an increased turnout would really be a good idea after all, this aspect should not be neglected by supporters of compulsory voting.

To begin with, the main assumption behind democratic representation is the assertion that people are able to decide what is best for them and can thus make informed choices about the leaders that should represent them. However this may not be the case with the majority of non-voters. This claim appears to be supported by Selb and Lachat (2009), who focus on an issue that touches the qualitative aspect of electoral participation rather than the quantitative one. Using 1995 survey data from Belgium, they assess the consistency of voter choices, namely the translation of policy preferences into party preferences. The study tests the hypothesis that compulsory voting drags to the polls a mass of uninformed voters that, consequently, choose candidates that do not embrace their views and thus do not actually represent their interests. Interestingly, the findings of the study support the hypothesis, as citizens who were estimated as highly likely to vote even if voting were not compulsory were significantly more knowledgeable about politics. In addition, the former could place party positions on several issues more accurately than the latter. Finally, and most importantly, having declared one would never vote if

voting were not compulsory had a high negative impact on party choice consistency with one's own policy preferences, measured following the proximity model.

Similar studies (Bennett and Resnick 1990; Czubinska, Miller et al. 2004; Rosema 2007) show that less informed citizens are less likely to vote under voluntary voting rules and support the idea that their candidate choices would be rather inconsistent with their own preferences. Nevertheless, supporters of compulsory voting may argue that it also has an educational impact, compelling people to get informed about politics and thus would actually overcome the initial information problem. However, as the study discussed above analyzed Belgium, a country where voting is compulsory, this argument finds little support in real life. To my knowledge, no study compares the knowledge level in the population before and after the implementation of compulsory voting, but it seems highly plausible to assume that the cost of getting informed is just as high with or without compulsory voting legislation, while the benefits of making the 'right' choice when voting is negligible given the slim chances of influencing the outcome, especially if turnout is increased.

Nevertheless, Gordon and Segura (1997) have shown in a cross-national study that compulsory voting has a positive effect on political sophistication. Still, their choice of operationalization of political sophistication is highly questionable. The researchers measure sophistication by calculating the absolute distances between a respondent's placement of parties on the left-right scale and the mean of the other respondents' estimations, and claiming that the mean voter is the most accurate in his evaluation is hardly justifiable.

Moving on, another relevant issue in this case is the type of political beliefs that non-voters generally harbor and whether or not they may harm democracy. Following this logic, Bennett

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and Resnick (1990) use data from several American surveys to compare voters and non-voters with regards to several issues, such as patriotism, attitudes towards different social groups and government intervention in the economic and social sphere. Findings reveal that voters and non-voters differ in these respects far less substantially than some may expect. Although in some instances the differences between the two subsamples turns out to be statistically significant, it is quasi-negligible substantively, and thus the non-voters' views are not identified as being less democratic than the voters'. The authors continue by analyzing opinion differences regarding several particular policy fields, the results being remarkably similar to the democracy issue with the exception of welfare policies (which non-voters favor more) and American external intervention.

Similarly, McManus-Czubinska et al. (2004) compare voters and non-voters in the Polish electorate. The identified differences between voters and non-voters in expressed opinions, on both issue priorities and self-placements, are quite small, not exceeding 4% with the exception of EU accession which non-voters are more likely to oppose. On the other hand, voters and non-voters differ greatly with regards to political affiliations and preferences, as non-voters are far more likely to oppose the government. Nevertheless, they are also more likely not to have any opinion on it, appearing to be more disengaged than disaffected.

Thus, it seems that the people who actually vote can be representative enough of the whole electorate and outcomes should not differ much if turnout increased. However, several studies assess the effects of turnout on party vote shares, the findings being at best mixed.

2.2 Higher Turnout: Whom They Vote For

So what do these less well informed and less knowledgeable people do when they enter the polling booth? To begin with, they may have to make an obvious decision: whether to cast a valid ballot or to spoil their vote. Apparently, under compulsory voting rules, many choose the latter, much more than voters from democracies with voluntary voting.

To begin with, the study of voting in Australia by Mackerras and McAllister (1999) should be mentioned. They identify increases in turnout ranging from 12% to 37% after the implementation of compulsory voting, although the figures subsequently decreased. However, one of the downsides of this institutional setting is the emergence of invalid ballots, which are encountered in Australian elections more often than in most modern democracies, counting up to as much as 10% of all ballots in some elections.

However, more dramatic findings are pointed out by Power and Roberts (1995) who conduct a study on the determinants of null voting and abstention in Brazilian elections from 1945 to 1990 under compulsory voting legislation. Unfortunately, the study focuses on aggregate and institutional variables, rather than using exit polls in order to identify significant effects at the individual level, and thus the article sheds little light on the issue of protest voting and its determinants at the micro level. However, the study does point out a situation symptomatic for the possible downsides of the implementation on compulsory voting: although abstention decreased to an average of about 10%, invalid ballots reached an impressive 43% in the 1990 election for the Chamber of Deputies, while about 35% of voters in the Senate election spoiled their ballot.

The findings of these studies raise the question of the efficiency of compulsory voting in achieving its goal of producing better representation and support the assertion that abstention is a symptom of an underlying problem rather than a problem in itself. Rather than pushing towards the polls groups of people with valid opinions on politics who, in normal conditions, find it difficult or not appealing enough to express them, it seems that compulsory voting drags to the ballots some people who are unwilling to participate or possibly unable to make a decision.

However, former abstainers would probably vote on most occasions, and what they would choose is what is most relevant in the context of the present study. In order to answer this question, scholars have either tried to uncover a pattern that connects high turnout with the success or failure of certain parties, or they attempted to predict the vote choices of abstainers, relying on simulations to compare actual election outcomes to hypothetical ones. So far, the existing literature reveals that the findings on this issue are mixed. Although it may appear from some empirical studies that abstainers are the typical clientele of the left, evidence that leftist parties would benefit from higher turnout are not convincing.

Thus, Fisher (2007) argues that the assumed connection between increased turnout and higher vote shares for leftist parties is disproved by empirical data. The scholar analyzes the relationship between the performance of leftist parties and turnout throughout several elections, concluding that it is not significant. Similarly, Nagel and McNulty (1996) assess whether increased turnout helps a party or another in senatorial and gubernatorial American elections. They argue that Democrats were indeed favored by higher turnouts particularly in constituencies where they were the minority, but this pattern has decayed after the 1960's due to the dealignment of peripheral voters and the weakening of class delimitations.

This argument is based on the theoretical considerations of DeNardo (1980), who argues that the assertion that high turnout would favor Democrats is based on false assumptions. DeNardo states that while Republican supporters could be considered *core voters,* their Democrat counterparts are *peripheral voters,* namely that they are more urban and ethnic, their interest in politics is small and they are more likely to go to the ballots when the excitement concerning the elections is higher. Republicans, on the other hand are more partisan and their turnout rates are less likely to fluctuate from election to election. Therefore, when turnout rises and more peripheral voters show up, the Democrats gain votes. However, the scholar asserts that peripheral voters are also more likely to defect and cross party lines and therefore the higher the turnout rates, the higher will the defection rates will be among Democrat voters.

However, patterns noticed in the USA are not necessarily fit for generalization to the rest of the world. Thus, studies that analyze electorates from other parts of the world should be held into account. Going beyond the American political scene, Pacek and Radcliff (1995) conduct a comprehensive study of turnout impact on leftist party vote shares in 19 industrial democracies, using data on elections from 1950 to 1990. The simple OLS model reveals that leftist parties gain on average .37% for every additional 1% of turnout, while in Germany, where class salience is higher, the difference can be even greater.

However, I believe this type of studies, which limit themselves to finding a relationship between turnout and the success or failure of certain parties, should be read with a certain degree of skepticism, as these studies do not take into account the possibility of external shocks that may lead to both increased turnout and increased vote shares for certain parties. Not only are arguments like DeNardo's worth considering, but also studies like these should consider the political orientation of the incumbents and the economic developments which may lead to a

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decay in their popularity levels and to shifts in the public opinion towards the opposing end of the ideological spectrum. However, it seems that, using this approach, the effect of turnout is quite hard to isolate.

Nevertheless, some scholars have attempted to study turnout effects by predicting the abstainers' vote choices based on the assumption that people who share some socio-demographic characteristics or issue-related preferences would vote for the same candidates. Still, these studies too reveal mixed results.

A relevant study was conducted by Bernhagen and Marsh (2007). Using multiple imputation, they identify some effects that different levels of turnout may have on election outcomes using data from 28 elections in 25 countries, namely that non-incumbents and small parties would have a small benefit from full turnout. On the contrary, center-left parties that would normally be assumed to win from a rise in the levels of participation, have no significant gains

Additionally, some studies that analyze single countries have also been conducted. Brunell and DiNardo (2004) assess the impact that non-voters have had in American presidential elections between 1952 and 2000. Although their findings suggest that higher turnout would slightly favor the Democrats, they identify only two instances in which the outcome of the election could have changed: 1980 and 2000.

Similarly, Citrin, Schickler and Sides (2003) simulate the impact non-voters would have on the outcomes of senatorial elections if they did show up at the polls. As expected, non-voters are more likely to favor Democrat candidates than voters, the difference being quite substantial in some cases: in 1994, for instance, Democrat non-voters in Washington were more numerous than republicans by over 10%. However, exceptions to this pattern do occur, suggesting that the rule

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is not set in stone. Moving on to actual election outcomes, the pattern is maintained. Democrats would have benefited from an increased turnout in the majority of elections, in some few cases even shifting the balance in their favor. These latter cases are, however, notably rare.

Moreover, Martinez and Gill (2005) estimate voters' probability to vote Democrat, vote Republican or abstain as a multinomial logit function of several variables related to candidate preference, the likelihood of voting, partisanship, evaluations of the economy, issue preferences and demographics. Then, they simulate the effects of increased turnout by progressively adding the non-voters with lowest probabilities of abstaining. The findings show that democrats would benefit from an increased turnout, although the estimated increase is small and the effects only affect the election outcome in very close elections.

Analyzing the same political scene, but focusing on a different issue, Hajnal and Trounstine (2005) challenge the assertion that turnout does not impact who wins and who loses in elections by focusing on the issue of minority representation in local elections in the USA. Their study reveals that when turnout is low in city and district elections, the representation of minorities, namely Latinos, Asian-Americans and African-Americans, is highly reduced. The results reveal that three out of ten elections in major cities would have had different outcomes if such an event had occurred, the counterfactual outcome having favored Democrats and minority candidates over whites and Republican.

Moving on the other side of the Atlantic, another relevant study on the issue of turnout effects on election outcome is conducted by Lutz (2007), using the particular case of Swiss direct democracy to investigate the issue. Lutz uses survey data to estimate non-voters' policy and party preferences and then assesses the impact the latter would have had on election outcomes if

they had voted. Surprisingly, in the cases where increased turnout would have had an effect, it is the right-wing parties who would have benefited, contrary to the commonly held belief that non-voters are more likely to have leftist preferences. In addition, the scholar emphasizes the highly important part played by the levels of political information, as results suggest that low levels of information often favor right-wing parties, and the two effects (low turnout and information) combined may counterbalance each other. However, it should be noted, as the author concedes, that these results are hard to generalize due to the particular institutional setting in which elections are held in Switzerland. It should be added, moreover, that comparing results of studies such as this one with studies on American elections could prove to be a tricky matter, due to the different understanding of what left and right stand for on the political spectrum in these societies.

Similarly, Pettersen and Rose (2007) assess the impact that full mobilization would have had on six Norwegian elections. Using party sympathy scores in order to predict the non-voters' votes, they surprisingly find that higher mobilization would not have changed in the slightest bit election outcomes. Not only would the winning party have never been different if turnout had been higher, but also the differences in vote shares never seem to be higher than 1%. Thus, the results support the assertion that people who do vote manage to represent the entire electorate quite well.

Finally, and probably most relevant in the context of the present study, Tóka and Popescu (2008) assess the impact of abstainers on election outcomes in Romania and Moldova. By predicting the expected vote choices of abstainers using a logistic model that predicts vote choices using socio-demographic variables, they find that if the turnout rates for all social groups were equal, election results would not change.

Thus, it seems there is not enough evidence to support the hypothesis that high turnout influences vote shares, and if it does, the differences are minimal. However, these findings do not definitively prove that high turnout has no impact at all. On the contrary, it could be argued that if more people vote, politicians will react, changing their policy agenda in response to the new demands.

2.3 Higher Turnout: How Politicians React

Unfortunately, it would be difficult to isolate the reaction that politicians have in response to higher turnout. Studies have focused on voter/non-voter ideology representation or on turnout impact on certain policies, but some shortcomings are noticeable when it comes to this kind of studies.

Griffin and Newman (2005) for instance, have conducted a study highly relevant in the context of the issue of turnout effects. Using aggregate poll data and Senator voting behavior, they assess whether or not voters' preferences are better represented in public policy that non voters' preferences. An OLS regression model reveals that voter ideology has a significant positive impact on public policy, while non-voter ideology has virtually no impact at all, Senators being thus disproportionally more responsive to voters.

Moreover, Hill, Leighley et al. (1995) assess whether the degree of lower-class mobilization affects social policy in the US states. Allegedly, politicians respond more to the claims of voters more than to those of non-voters, as the former voice their preferences more and, by participating in elections, alter the candidates' chances of being (re)elected. Using pooled time series analysis, on US states data from 1978 to 1990, the scholars identify a significant, positive relationship between lower class-mobilization and welfare benefits provided by state administration, thus

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contributing a highly relevant finding in the context of the turnout importance issue. However, the authors concede that public opinion may be influenced by public officials, the causal direction not being clear-cut.

However, all these studies can tell us is that voters choose candidates who share their policy views and rather support the hypothesis that a higher turnout would change have an impact on who wins elections. In the first case, voters do have an impact on who gets elected, while non-voters do not. As for the second, if more people from the lower-class vote, they will choose politicians who promise more welfare benefits. What these studies do not tell us is whether or not politicians themselves actually change the policies they embrace in response to popular requests, a question more difficult to answer, but more relevant, as if the answer were yes, one could safely assert that, even though high turnout does not reverse election outcomes, it does provide better representation. However, to the best of my knowledge, no study convincingly answers this question.

2.4 A Final Word

So far, the literature suggests no clear-cut argument that implementing compulsory voting is justified. To begin with, non-voters are shown to be different from voters in only a few aspects, but what is probably most relevant to the issue is the fact that, since they are less informed, they may not be able to make the best choices in their interest. In addition, studies that assess the impact of turnout on election outcomes, be they empirical studies or simulations, show mixed results and, even when a certain degree of impact is identified, its magnitude is often close to being negligible. Finally, no convincing argument exists in favor of the assertion that higher turnout, even without having an impact on who wins the election, changes the way politicians

behave, making them implement policies which work to the advantage of groups that are neglected when turnout is low.

However, we have no reason to generalize these findings, as research on this issue is far from being exhaustive. As party alignments and structures of the electorate may vary between societies, it is not completely unlikely that unexpected patterns may emerge.

Chapter 3 Research Design

3.1 Case Selection

The aim of this study is, as previously stated, to assess the impact that an increased turnout could have on Romanian election outcomes. The reasons for choosing this particular case go beyond this author's personal interest with the political scene of her country of origin, being based on several reasons that make this case a representative of a category that has rarely been scrutinized before regarding aspects discussed here. Firstly, previous studies of the effects of turnout on electoral outcomes have most often neglected post-communist countries, whose only quite recent implementation of competitive elections has generated a turnout pattern that clearly differentiates them from their western counterparts. While the first free Romanian elections in 1990 have witnessed a turnout of approximately 90%, voters subsequently defected in higher and higher proportion from electoral participation, the turnout rates reaching little over 50% in the most recent presidential elections, according to the Electoral Central Bureau.

Secondly, it is often proclaimed by the press that, in Romania, unlike the patterns noticed in western democracies, poorer and less educated people are more likely to vote, particularly in rural areas. The cause of this existing pattern has been informally blamed on corruption on local levels and vote buying, although this supposition is only of marginal interest here. However, as the orthodox theory claims that higher turnouts generated by compulsory voting would favor leftist parties due to the fact that their target electorate is more likely to refrain from voting, testing turnout effects in this supposedly particular setting could produce quite interesting results.

Thirdly, the distribution of electoral support of the three major parties existent in the Romanian context displays a particularity that is worth exploring. Although the liberal party (PNL) clearly

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displays the characteristics of some of its counterparts in other countries, being supported mainly by urban, younger and better educated voters, the other self-declared rightist party in Romania, (PDL) shows remarkable similarities with the social democrat party (PSD) with regards to the social composition of its supporters, the differences being significantly lower than it would be expected. Surprisingly though, the dataset that I use in this study shows that the general public place PNL closer to the center on the left-right scale than PDL. In these circumstances, who exactly would be the winner if turnout were higher is not an intuition as straightforward as it may seem.

Finally, although compulsory voting has never been considered as a highly important issue in Romania, there has been at least an attempt to lobby in its favor. In 2009, Adriana Săftoiu, member in the lower chamber of Parliament, launched a campaign aiming to raise awareness about the positive impact that compulsory voting would have in the context of Romanian elections and arguing in favor of its implementation. Her main argument was that this regulation would limit the parties' vote-buying possibilities, a problem that is repeatedly emphasized every time major elections are organized in Romania[1]. Surprisingly enough, as the theory and some empirical findings claim that compulsory voting would favor leftist parties, Săftoiu was at the time (and still is) a member of the National Liberal Party, this detail hinting to the supposition that the situation in Romania is somewhat atypical.

However, the legislative proposal found little support among politicians, and the proponent's own party was no exception. Politicians who did express an opinion on the issue mostly stated that voters should be won back and convinced to go to the polls by persuasion, not by coercion, and that compulsory voting would not solve the problems Romanian democracy is facing.

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[1] For more information, visit http://www.votulobligatoriu.ro/ (in Romanian).

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Needless to say, the project only slightly penetrated the public agenda and never actually made its way to Parliament (where it would have probably been rejected anyway).

Still, the compulsory voting in Romania saga is continued in 2012. While anemic debates in the press and occasional declarations made by politicians have touched the issue on several occasions, the idea emerged in a quite surprising way in April 2012: taking advantage of the low attendance in parliament, two MP's, one independent and one member of a marginal political party in parliament, submitted a bill proposing the implementation of compulsory voting and the bill was approved by the Senate[2]. The other politicians' reactions were mixed, their arguments being based on quite unsurprising assertions: supporters saluted compulsory voting's efficiency in discouraging fraud, while opponents criticized the supposedly unjustified intrusion in the sphere if individual freedom. Since then, however, the issue has not caught the attention of the press, suggesting that the bill will probably remain buried somewhere in the Parliament's archives.

Still, this turn of events calls for an answer to some questions: what would Romanian election results look like if compulsory voting were implemented? Are non-voters truly different from voters and thus underrepresented? Would the National Liberal Party have gained votes in this situation, as Săftoiu probably expected? This is what the present study, although limited in means, attempts to unveil.

3.2 Methodology

In order to rightfully decide on a research method that is appropriate to this type of study, I should briefly restate the main goals that this analysis aims to achieve. In a few words, what I

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[2] For more information, visit http://www.cotidianul.ro/votul-obligatoriu-adoptat-de-senat-179238/ (in Romanian).

plan to accomplish is, firstly, to identify whether or not voters and non-voters differ in terms of belonging to a social group or another, in order to answer the first research question tackled by this study. This goal is highly relevant if we consider the main reason why there are several supporters of compulsory voting: the assertion that certain segments of the population are, for various reasons, underrepresented in elections, and therefore the results are biased, as only part of the population gets to actually have any impact on the type of policies that the new government will implement.

As mentioned before, the people who do not show up to the ballots on Election Day are assumed to be poorer, less educated, less informed, possibly disenchanted with politics and, as it is claimed, likely to display different preferences than those who actually decide who the winning political formation will be. In order to achieve this goal, special attention will be paid to the 'usual suspects', namely demographics. Age, income, years of schooling, employment and the type of settlement in which respondents reside will be analyzed, using basic statistical techniques in order to assess whether or not voters are different from non-voters along these dimensions and, if such differences are identified, what their magnitude is. This analysis will determine whether or not certain groups of citizens are indeed underrepresented in elections.

Secondly, it is relevant to identify citizens' probability to vote, expanding, however, the analysis, to other possible explanatory variables besides the demographics. Using this model would provide a better image of the impact of several factors on people's decision to go to the ballots, by emphasizing each variable's effect. This way, we can see if membership in a certain social group does influence voting even when holding constant other circumstantial factors, such as interest in politics or attitude towards the state's institutions.

However, what this analysis cannot do is to help the simulation that I run in the next section. Naturally, simply assuming that, if compulsory voting were implemented, turnout to be 100% or just slightly lower would mean grossly rejecting a reality that should be taken into account when trying to conduct a study of this type. Studies reveal that even in countries where compulsory voting is indeed imposed, and not simply a formal rule for which punishments are not enforced, the turnout is nowhere near 100% (Birch 2009: 82). However, people with the highest probability of voting are not necessary the same under voluntary and compulsory voting rules. Although studies have tried to identify who are the people that vote under compulsory rules but would not otherwise, but it is not justifiable to apply the same pattern in Romania. Therefore, alas, I have to make the gross assumption that all citizens would vote.

Finally, I will establish voter profiles for each of the competing parties, namely I will draw from the self-declared voters of each party a pattern of item responses that is characteristic for the supporters of each of the competing political factions. This finding should serve later on to assign declared non-voters probabilities of voting for each party and, thus, estimate the amount of votes that each of them would gain if the turnout was higher and the non-voters would actually go to vote. Following Tóka and Popescu (2008), the probabilities are averaged and I compute bootstrapped standard errors, thus estimating the amount of votes that each party would get.

For the moment, what is of vital importance is deciding on a method that is appropriate for the issue depicted here, namely assigning to individuals probabilities of voting for each party. Obviously, the response variable here is categorical and unordered; although it could be argued that parties or candidates could be placed on a continuous left-right scale, even if it were so and their relative positions were not debatable, it should not be assumed that voters are necessarily

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aware of the parties positions or that they rank parties in identical ways. Secondly, the explanatory variables are both continuous and categorical. Therefore, following Martinez and Gill (2005), I use multinomial logistic regression in order to assign voters probabilities to vote for each party.

The technique I have just mentioned is a generalized version of the logistic regression, allowing however the response variable to have more than two categories and the explanatory variables to be quantitative or categorical (Agresti 2007). What this technique does is basically identify a linear function of the explanatory variables that is equal to the natural logarithm of the odds of each of the categories of the response variables over the randomly assigned reference/baseline category.

Finally, I perform the same analysis for the second round of the elections, where only the first two candidates compete. The procedure is identical, except the fact that I use binary logistic regression. Thus, I will identify a model that predicts vote choice along a series of socio-demographic and attitudinal variables and then I will compute the voters' probabilities to vote for each of the candidates. Then, similarly, the probabilities will be averaged and the bootstrapped standard errors will be computed.

After that, all there is left to do is compare the candidate vote shares among voters, non-voters, actual election outcome and simulated election outcome (full turnout). Thus, I will emphasize the differences between voters and non-voters and the effects of full turnout on election outcomes.

3.3 Data

This study will use the database depicting the results of a three-wave panel study conducted as part of the Romanian Electoral Studies Program[3] during the 2009 presidential elections. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, the response rate being 48%, resulting in a sample of 1504 respondents. The first wave of the study was conducted before the first round of elections, the second one in between, and the third one after the second round. Out of the 1504 respondents, 1078 (71.7%) participated in all three waves.

Table 1 Respondent Status in the Panel

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	participated only in wave 1	54	3.6	3.6	3.6
	participated in all 3 waves	1078	71.7	71.7	75.3
	participated only in wave 1 and 2	47	3.1	3.1	78.4
	participated only in wave 1 and 3	325	21.6	21.6	100.0
	Total	1504	100.0	100.0	

There are several reasons that make this dataset appropriate for the present study. To begin with, the survey features several questions regarding voting intentions, candidate support and intensity of support, party identification etc., but also demographics and attitudinal items, all highly suitable variables for estimating the determinants of turnout and of candidate preference. Secondly, since the study was conducted in three waves, the available data includes not only voting intention, but also self-reported participation, the latter information being collected after the event has taken place. This particularity is highly useful for estimating actual turnout, as most

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[3] Available at http://www.polito.ubbcluj.ro/romanianelectoraldata/content/surveys

respondents have been asked this question on three separate occasions, using different wording. Regarding the first round of elections, for instance, they are asked if they intend to vote in the first wave, and then in the second and third wave they are asked if they have voted.

However, there are several issues that should be overcome in order to use the dataset to its highest potential, some being inherent to any survey data, some being caused by questionnaire design. To begin with, the researchers apparently intended to test the validity of more types of question wordings, and thus used two types of questionnaire in the first two waves. For instance, the question regarding the likelihood of voting in the first round is coded on a 0-10 scale for half of the sample and a 1-4 scale for the other, and this is not the only example. However, as I will show later on, this aggregation issue turns out to be quite easy to overcome, unlike the fact that, as I will point out in more detail in the next few paragraphs, the self-reported turnout is substantially higher than the actual turnout reported by the officials.

Looking at the data provided by the Central Electoral Bureau[4], the turnout for the first round of the 2009 presidential elections was 54.4% including the voters from the Diaspora. However, 84.8% of the respondents of the RES survey declare to have voted in the first round of the presidential elections, even after coding as non-voters the ones who contradict themselves in the third wave.

There is, of course, a possible explanation to this phenomenon, but not good enough to account for the whole difference. The basic idea is related to the fact that many people are actually emigrants, living and working abroad for most of the time, but are not registered as such and thus still appear on the eligible voter lists from their circumscriptions of origin. The people in

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[4] Available at http://www.polito.ubbcluj.ro/romanianelectoraldata/content/elections-results

question are highly less likely to vote than the ones living in their country, as voting cannot be done via internet or mail and embassies or consulates are often too far from their location for them to spend time and money to get there on election day. In addition, these people are impossible to contact by any pollster, and thus their absence from the ballots will not figure in survey data. It is thus likely that, even though the percentage of self-declared voters is higher than the one identified by the Central Electoral Bureau, this is not so necessarily only because people do not vote and yet give socially desirable answers when surveyed, but also because the official lists are inaccurate, containing more names than eligible voters actually living in the circumscriptions.

Although it is difficult to know the exact number of Romanians living abroad, the National Institute of Statistics estimates show that their number is close to 2.7 million[5]. If we subtract this number from the list of eligible voters (about 18.3 million) and the number of Diaspora votes from the total number of votes, we obtain a turnout of about 63.5% of the people living in Romania and of whom this survey is representative

Nevertheless, the number does not match the one revealed by the survey data, so false reporting should exist at least to some extent. In order to obtain a count as accurate as possible, I recoded as non-voters the respondents most likely not to have voted: those who contradicted themselves in the two final rounds of the survey (reporting they had voted in one round and that they had not in the other; reporting a candidate in one round and then another one), those who stated they were not sure whether or not they would vote. The resulting variable indicated a turnout of about 67%.

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[5] Visit http://statistici.insse.ro for more details (in Romanian)

A similar procedure was used in order to compute the turnout for the second round of the elections. In the second panel wave, people were asked whether they would vote in the second round, and those who denied or were not sure were coded as non-voters. Then, in the third wave, people were asked whether they had voted, then whom they had voted for, and then later they were asked in two questions whether they had voted for each candidate, whether they had voted for both, and whether they had voted for none. All contradictory answers were coded as non-voters. However, an additional panel wave that would have helped to identify more contradictions is absent this time, and so the turnout in the data is 71.6%, while the actual turnout was 58.02%. Having these shortcomings in mind, I move on to the analysis.

Chapter 4 Analysis

I now reach the main part of this thesis, where the hypotheses are tested empirically using data from the 2009 Romanian Presidential Election. I focus on two main issues, each touching on a separate aspect of increased turnout and its possible implications when it comes to election outcomes. Firstly, I compare voters and non-voters, trying to identify whether or not there are significant differences between these two groups in terms of socio-demographic characteristics, democratic attitudes and interest in politics. This analysis not only gives a hint of what the non-voters' electoral choices would look like, but can also suggest whether or not bringing this group of people at the ballots would increase the ratio of voters with anti-democratic attitudes. The results show that there are indeed significant differences when it comes to social group representation, as certain characteristics are shown to have significant positive impact on one's probability to vote. In addition, voters are shown to be more interested and engaged in politics. However, when it comes to democratic attitudes, I find no significant differences on most dimensions tested.

Secondly, I identify a model that predicts the most likely candidate choice of non-voters and then I compute the vote shares that candidates would win among non-voters. The results show that not much would have changed if non-voters had gone to the ballots. Unfortunately, data collection issues make it difficult for me to say whether or not the results I obtain for the second round are reliable, but I can nonetheless maintain that the outcome of the first round would have been the same: Basescu and Geoana would have qualified for the runoff.

4.1 Voters and Non-Voters

I now start with the first part of my analysis, aiming to identify whether or not there are significant differences between voters and non-voters in terms of social group belonging. To begin with, the relevant variables will be tested individually, using, according to the type of variables involved, t-tests and chi-squares. Then I will test using the same methods variables regarding political interests and orientation. Next, the probability of voting will be assessed identifying the joint effect of all relevant variables, using binary logistic regression. Finally, I look at some attitudinal variables, assessing whether or not voters and non-voters differ with regards to democratic attitudes

4.1.1 Socio-Demographic Differences

When analyzing the differences with regards to income, education and age for the untrimmed self-reported vote attendance variable (which splits the sample into declared voters and declared non-voters rather than actual voters and non-voters), all variables with the exception of age are significant, the results being less than surprising. The self-declared voters are apparently richer and better educated, the differences being significant at the .05 level. On average, self-declared voters individually earn more by 114 lei, have a household income higher by 350 lei, a household income per capita higher by 92 lei and attended 1.24 extra years of school.

This pattern fits the general stereotype, with the exception, at first glance, of age, which is not significant in any of the three analyses. However, the main reason why age does not reach statistical significance lies in the fact that voters and non-voters do differ I terms of age, just not when it comes to the mean age in each group, but in the way they are distributed. While voters are clustered around the mean age, non-voters reach the extremes more frequently, the variance

being higher for non-voters than for voters. This pattern is observed for both alternative measures of turnout.

Table 2 Voters and Non-Voters - Socio-Demographic Differences (1)

		Voted			Voted (trimmed)		
		t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Income	Equal variances assumed	-2.036	**.042**	-1.14045	-1.417	.157	-.59880
	Equal variances not assumed	-2.310	**.022**	-1.14045	-1.497	.135	-.59880
Household income	Equal variances assumed	-2.928	**.004**	-3.50859	-2.218	**.027**	-1.95294
	Equal variances not assumed	-3.900	**.000**	-3.50859	-2.459	**.014**	-1.95294
Household income per member	Equal variances assumed	-2.058	**.040**	-.92351	-.834	.404	-.27671
	Equal variances not assumed	-2.286	**.023**	-.92351	-.864	.388	-.27671
Years of schooling	Equal variances assumed	-3.900	**.000**	-1.242	-2.236	**.026**	-.543
	Equal variances not assumed	-3.767	**.000**	-1.242	-2.179	**.030**	-.543
Age	Equal variances assumed	.026	.979	.036	.292	.770	.305
	Equal variances not assumed	.022	.982	.036	.277	.782	.305

Next, when I use the second measure of turnout, the pattern is almost identical, except the significance of the variables that measure income of which only one remains significant. Thus, voters' household incomes are on average larger by 195 lei than non voters', the difference being statistically significant at the 0.02 level. In addition, they attend .5 additional years of school, the difference being statistically significant at the .02 level. One should note, however, that when voting is measured this way, the differences are smaller than when self-reported voting is analyzed.

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I now look at three more variables (employment, type of settlement and sex). In this case, it appears that there are no significant differences when self-reported voting is included in the model. However, significant differences do appear when the measure for turnout is trimmed.

Table 3 Voters and Non-Voters - Socio-Demographic Differences (2)

			Unemployed		Urban		Sex	
			No	Yes	No	Yes	Female	Male
Voted	No	% within Voted	83.9%	16.1%	41.4%	58.6%	40.3%	59.7%
		% within column	15.9%	12.0%	15.1%	15.3%	13.8%	16.3%
		% of Total	12.7%	2.4%	6.3%	8.9%	6.1%	9.1%
	Yes	% within Voted	78.9%	21.1%	41.8%	58.2%	45.0%	55.0%
		% within column	84.1%	88.0%	84.9%	84.7%	86.2%	83.7%
		% of Total	67.0%	17.9%	35.4%	49.4%	38.2%	46.6%
	Chi2 (Sig.)		1.866 (.172)		.008 (.928)		1.419 (.234)	
Voted (trimmed)	No	% within Voted	83.2%	16.8%	36.8%	63.2%	43.3%	56.7%
		% within column	33.1%	26.2%	28.7%	34.7%	31.2%	33.1%
		% of Total	26.4%	5.3%	11.9%	20.4%	13.9%	18.3%
	Yes	% within Voted	78.1%	21.9%	43.4%	56.6%	45.4%	54.6%
		% within column	66.9%	73.8%	71.3%	65.3%	68.8%	66.9%
		% of Total	53.3%	15.0%	29.4%	38.3%	30.8%	37.0%
	Chi2 (Sig.)		**3.525 (.060)**		**6.143 (.023)**		.504 (.478)	

Thus, it appears that only there are no significant differences when self-declared vote participation is analyzed. However, within the trimmed variable, 65% of urban residents vote, while 71% of rural residents do. In addition, in this case, the unemployment variable also becomes significant, albeit at the .06 level, indicating that 73.8% of the unemployed vote, while only 66.9% of the employed do so. Nevertheless, as the former sample is rather small, I would look at these results with a certain amount of doubt. Gender, on the other hand, is not significant in any of the instances.

Using only the information we have so far, the results appear slightly conflicting in the context of the aims of the present study. It appears that all variables but the type of settlement fit the

pattern stated in the theory and why this anomaly occurs is but a matter of speculation. It is plausible to assume that the party representatives are more effective at mobilizing voters in rural areas, where the smaller size of the community makes the personal ties between elected officials and their constituencies tighter, but it is beyond the scope of this study to further explore this hypothesis.

4.1.2 The Final Model

However, the information obtained so far does not indicate either of the groups to be more likely to vote. Therefore, the research should be deepened and more explanatory variables should be included. Finally, I include the socio-demographics in a logistic regression model, in order to assess the impact of the explanatory variables on the respondents' likelihood to vote. Although some of the variables have statistical significance, the model performs rather poorly at explaining a respondent's likelihood to vote. I thus included in the model several other variables that could help achieve more fitting results.

The model fares better than the previous one, but still not well enough. While *urban* loses significance, unemployment and income are still significant at the .1 level. Nevertheless, what is easily noticeable is that, besides some socio-demographic variables that are identified to have an impact there are other variables that appear to influence an individual's probability to vote. Thus, having high levels of trust in the state's institutions, being interested in politics and believing that there is a political organization in Romania that represents their interests positively influences respondents' probability to vote, the latter having the largest effect.

CEU eTD Collection

Table 4 Determinants of Voting

	Model 1 (Socio-demographics)			Model 2 (full)		
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Constant	-.002	.997	.998	1.397	.333	4.041
Urban(1)	.528	.004	1.696	.203	.546	1.225
Household income	.026	.005	1.026	.029	**.055**	1.030
Years of schooling	.037	.157	1.037	-.022	.671	.979
Gender(1)	-.078	.645	.925	.275	.363	1.316
Age	.006	.255	1.006	.009	.349	1.009
Unemployed(1)	-.437	.046	.646	-.743	**.072**	.476
Vote is a duty				-.251	.160	.778
Trust in political institutions				.206	**.004**	1.229
Elections influence the situation of Romania				-.035	.672	.966
Elections influence my standard of living				.050	.467	1.051
Political efficacy				-.030	.563	.971
Politics is too complicated to understand				.014	.783	1.014
My vote does not matter				.155	.208	1.168
Interest in politics				.330	**.095**	1.391
Perceived difference between election winner and loser				-.199	.411	.819
Partisan (1)				-.793	**.009**	.452
Political information				-.030	.794	.970
The administration influences my life				-.030	.667	.971
Hosmer and Lemeshow (Sig.)			6.100 (.636)			7.648 (.469)
Percentage correct			71.2			79.3
Nagelkerke R^2			.041			.220

The results are less than surprising. As expected, people who are interested and engaged in politics and who also trust political institutions are more likely to vote. However, what is particularly relevant in this context is the fact that socio-economic factors have significant impact themselves on people's probability to vote, thus suggesting that, as the supporters of compulsory voting claim, there are social groups whose political opinions are not converted into votes. As expected, low-income respondents are less likely to vote. Education, however, loses significance when included in the model, probably because the correlation between education and income is high enough to bias p-levels. However, it appears that, contrary to what would normally be expected, rural residents are more likely to vote than urban ones. Identifying the reasons for this anomaly, however, go beyond the scope of this study.

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4.1.3 Non-Voters and Democracy

So now that I have confirmed that voters are indeed different from non-voters in terms of socio-demographic characteristics and interest in politics, the question that arises is to what degree their political affiliations are also different. Thus, before moving on to the predicted vote choices, I finally test whether or not, as some would claim, non-voters could be considered a threat to democracy due to the fact that their opinions are significantly more anti-democratic than the voters' and, if they did come to the ballots, they would choose candidates with xenophobic or authoritarian tendencies. The data that I work with does not contain, unfortunately, many questions regarding the respondents' values or attitudes in too much details. However, there are, firstly, some items that attempt to identify their beliefs regarding what groups should or should not have the right to vote. I believe the respondents' position regarding the justifiability of granting certain groups, deemed as undesirable by some, could be a good indicator of their attitudes towards democracy.

Secondly, the respondents are asked three separate questions more abstract in nature: the degree to which they believe Romania should have a democratic system, should have a strong leader who makes decisions on his own or should be lead by a government of technocrats. The results are summarized in tables 5 and 6.

Table 5 Voters and Non-Voters: Democratic Attitudes (1)

Crosstab			Voted		Total
			No	Yes	
In your opinion, should have the right to vote … homosexuals	yes	Count	295	653	948
		% within vot3	88.6%	85.1%	86.2%
	no	Count	38	114	152
		% within vot3	11.4%	14.9%	13.8%
	Chi^2(Sig.				2.323(.127)
In your opinion, should have the right to vote … Jehovah's witnesses	yes	Count	311	658	969
		% within vot3	91.2%	87.2%	88.4%
	no	Count	30	97	127
		% within vot3	8.8%	12.8%	11.6%
	Chi^2(Sig.				**3.761 (.052)***
In your opinion, should have the right to vote … people that can't write and read	yes	Count	211	450	661
		% within vot3	60.6%	57.3%	58.3%
	no	Count	137	336	473
		% within vot3	39.4%	42.7%	41.7%
	Chi^2(Sig.				1.134 (.287)
In your opinion, should have the right to vote … persons that have been criminally convicted	yes	Count	208	460	668
		% within vot3	65.2%	61.7%	62.7%
	no	Count	111	286	397
		% within vot3	34.8%	38.3%	37.3%
	Chi^2(Sig.				1.199 (.274)
In your opinion, should have the right to vote … Roma/Gypsies	yes	Count	315	739	1054
		% within vot3	90.5%	92.8%	92.1%
	no	Count	33	57	90
		% within vot3	9.5%	7.2%	7.9%
	Chi^2(Sig.				1.801 (.180)
In your opinion, should have the right to vote … other ethnic minorities	yes	Count	328	766	1094
		% within vot3	94.0%	96.5%	95.7%
	no	Count	21	28	49
		% within vot3	6.0%	3.5%	4.3%
	Chi^2(Sig.				**3.666 (.056)***
In your opinion, should have the right to vote … people that have recently obtained citizenship	yes	Count	305	722	1027
		% within vot3	89.4%	91.5%	90.9%
	no	Count	36	67	103
		% within vot3	10.6%	8.5%	9.1%
	Chi^2(Sig.				1.226 (.268)
In your opinion, should have the right to vote … Romanians that reside abroad	yes	Count	311	688	999
		% within vot3	89.4%	85.9%	86.9%
	no	Count	37	113	150
		% within vot3	10.6%	14.1%	13.1%
	Chi^2(Sig.				2.581 (.108)
In your opinion, should have the right to vote … people that do not pay taxes	yes	Count	290	610	900
		% within vot3	85.0%	80.2%	81.7%
	no	Count	51	151	202
		% within vot3	15.0%	19.8%	18.3%
	Chi^2(Sig.				**3.756 (.053)***

As we can see, the vast majority of the items analyzed indicate there is no significant difference between voters and non-voters. Looking at the first battery of questions, there are only three instances in which the differences are significant: the ones concerning Jehovah's witnesses, ethnic minorities and people who do not pay taxes. Interestingly enough, it appears that non-voters are more tolerant towards Jehovah's witnesses and tax evaders. 91.2% of non-voters believe that the former should have the right to vote, but only 87.2% of voters do, the difference being significant at the .1 level. In addition, when it comes to the latter group, 85% of non-voters believe they should have the right to vote, while only 80.2% of voters do. The only instance when the results fit the pattern that the theory leads us to expect is the question regarding ethnic minorities (Roma not included), where 96.5% of voters believe they should have the right to vote, but 94% of non-voters do.

Table 6 Voters and Non-Voters: Democratic Attitudes (2)

		t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
How good would be for Romania to have a strong leader	Equal variances assumed	-.872	.383	-.050
	Equal variances not assumed	-.881	.379	-.050
How good would be for Romania to have a government of technocrats	Equal variances assumed	.119	.905	.005
	Equal variances not assumed	.120	.905	.005
How good would be for Romania to have a democratic political system?	Equal variances assumed	1.084	.279	.036
	Equal variances not assumed	1.042	.298	.036

However, when it comes to the second battery of questions, things are clear-cut. No significant difference exists between voters and non-voters when it comes to attitudes towards democracy, technocracy or having a strong leader. Substantively, the differences are strikingly small, the

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highest of them occurring at the question regarding strong leadership – .05 on a 1-4 scale. In addition, p-levels never get near a statistically significant level.

Therefore, all in all, it can be concluded that non-voters would not be threat to democracy if they voted, as their opinions are not significantly more anti-democratic. However, the same results could be very well interpreted from another perspective: it appears that, as far as attitudes towards democracy go, voters do a pretty good job at representing the electorate in its entirety.

However, if we go back and look at the previous analyses, when people's probability to vote was estimated using socio-demographic and attitudinal variables, it seemed that there are indeed social groups that are not accurately represented by the people who vote. For this reason, it would be relevant to estimate who they would choose if they did and whether or not their votes would actually change anything in the election outcome.

4.2 Predicting Candidate Choice

I now proceed to the second part of the analysis, namely identifying a model that predicts what candidate respondents would choose if they were to vote. However, before attempting to specify the model, special attention must be given to the construction of the dependent variable, and the fact that the survey which was used to gather the data was carried as a three-wave study before, between and after the two election rounds can hopefully help in obtaining a more accurate measure of the vote shares.

4.2.1 Measurement

To begin with, I turn to the self-reported candidate choice in the first round. Respondents were asked twice for whom they voted in the first round, namely in the second and third wave of the

panel study. This particularity of the survey design eases somewhat the task of obtaining a measure as accurate as possible of the actual vote shares, as it allows us to identify the voters who contradict themselves between the two waves of the panel study.

The reasons for which this may occur are quite numerous. Voters may simply forget for whom they have voted for, especially if they are among the undecided who made their candidate choice little time before the elections took place and thus had weak preferences for the candidate which they supported. On the other hand, respondents may succumb to the bandwagon effect, claiming they have won for the winner of the elections in the first round as well as the second. In addition, some respondents, possibly due to the massive press coverage of the opposition's fraud accusations after the second round of the elections, may have felt uneasy to have contributed to the incumbent's supposedly undeserved victory, and thus claimed to have voted for one of the challengers. Furthermore, the voters of the second most important challenger, Crin Antonescu, may claim to have voted for one of the winners of the first round. Nevertheless, even when I do not exclude the sample the respondents who are stated not to have participated in the first round of elections, and analyzing only the three main candidates, some contradictions do appear.

Table 7 Self-Contradicting Voters

		Has voted for (W3)				
		Mircea Geoana	Crin Antonescu	Traian Basescu	Other	Total
Has voted for (W2)	Mircea Geoana	216	9	13	7	245
	Crin Antonescu	17	125	11	2	155
	Traian Basescu	9	9	216	7	241
	Other	6	4	6	61	77
Total		248	147	246	77	718

The number of people who contradict themselves sums up to 106, quite high in the context of this sample. The highest number of fleeing voters appears to belong to Antonescu, who did not

qualify in the second round, apparently supporting the hypothesis that this group of respondents reported having voted for the candidate they supported in the second round. However, although the issue of missing values may appear in further analyses, there are no reasons, based on theory or empirical findings, that are strong enough to assign the contradictory respondents one value or the other. Therefore, the candidate choice in the first round variable will be coded as missing for the latter group of people. Needless to say, the decision to do so may create a bias in the estimates: since not all people participated in both waves of the survey, those who responded in only one wave cannot be tested for consistency, and thus their single response will be assumed to be true. However, this minor caveat cannot be avoided and should thus be considered one of the many inevitable limitations of a study of this sort.

Next, we should question the validity of the responses, as over reporting election turnout is quite a big problem in this survey (as in all surveys, to be more precise) which has been extensively discussed in the previous section. For this reason, I recoded as missing all respondents who were identified as non-voters after trimming the variable, and thus excluded respondents who had very weak preferences for their candidate of choice or who stated to be undecided. The rationale behind this procedure is the assertion that those particular respondents were most likely either not to have voted at all or, if they did, to misreport their candidate of choice.

Finally, in order to make the subsequent analysis easier to perform, but also in order not to encumber the analysis with irrelevant details, a final change should be made to the response variable. Looking at the descriptive statistics, it is easily noticeable that, out of the many candidates, only three are actually relevant as contestants aiming to win the presidency. To be more specific, the percentages of the first three candidates sum up to about 90% of the total valid votes. Given these circumstances, including the other contestants as separate categories would

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not only provide information that is not extremely relevant in the context of the election outcome, but would also hinder the part of the analysis discussed in the next part, when I attempt to identify a model that predicts each voter's likelihood to vote for each candidate. Firstly, since I analyze a presidential election and not a parliamentary one, the amounts of votes obtained by the minor candidates do not indicate the extent in which certain segments of the population are represented in the legislative or executive, since there is only one winner. Secondly, due to the small amount of respondents that state their support for any of the other candidates besides the main three, it is highly probable that the inherently high amount of empty cells would obstruct the testing of the multinomial model that will be used.

The most intuitive solution to this problem is apparently quite straightforward: the main three candidates could be analyzed separately, while the others could be combined into a single category labeled "other". However, a quick glance at the type of candidates crowded in the fictitious category suggests that doing this may cause problems in itself. The 10% that the three main contestants lose to lesser opponents are divided, between Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the ultra-nationalist candidate of the extreme right-wing party PRM (Greater Romania Party), Hunor Kelemen, the candidate of the ethnic Hungarian party (UDMR) and Sorin Oprescu, an independent with social-democratic orientation, plus other minor candidates. It is hard to claim that the voters of these candidates could for a homogenous group, and thus when I compute the voting probabilities, I decide to exclude them from the analysis altogether, limiting the study to predicting the vote shares of the three main contenders.

Table 8 Candidate Vote Shares

		Percent (all)	Percent (first three only)
Valid	Mircea Geoana	34.1	38.1
	Crin Antonescu	20.0	22.1
	Traian Basescu	36.4	39.8
	Sorin Oprescu	3.1	
	C. V. Tudor	3.0	
	Kelemen Hunor	1.6	
	George Becali	.9	
	Other	.6	

4.2.2 Socio-Demographic Differences

Next, it is relevant to once again look at the demographics, investigating whether or not there is a pattern that distinguishes one candidate's voters from the other. It is usually expected that supporters of rightist parties are different from the ones of leftist parties in terms of income, education, age and settlement type, the former supposedly being better educated, younger, richer and more predominantly urban. However, as previously stated, the situation in Romania is not clear-cut, as the Liberal-Democrat Party is generally associated with the right, but nevertheless is expected to display more ambivalent characteristics, being more populist and closer to the catch-all ideal-type than its liberal counterpart.

I therefore proceed in a manner similar to the one used in the previous section. I first analyze the variables one by one, using, depending on the type, one-way ANOVAs and chi-squares. Then, I will include these variables, along with other predictors, in a multinomial logistic model, in order to identify a means to predict which party respondents are most likely to vote according to some of the characteristics they display.

Firstly, all explanatory variables are significant. I thus continue by applying Tukey's post-hoc test in order to identify which between-group differences are significant and whether or not the findings fit the theory.

Table 9 Candidate Supporters: Socio-Demographic Differences (1)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Household income	Between Groups	407.794	3	135.931	5.571	.001
	Within Groups	13638.686	559	24.398		
	Total	14046.479	562			
Years of Schooling	Between Groups	558.050	3	186.017	12.664	.000
	Within Groups	10340.928	704	14.689		
	Total	10898.977	707			
Age	Between Groups	5967.138	3	1989.046	7.401	.000
	Within Groups	191901.019	714	268.769		
	Total	197868.157	717			

To begin with, it is easily noticeable that the supporters of Basescu, the PDL candidate, and the ones of Geoana, the PSD one, are quite similar. The difference in household income per member are highly statistically insignificant (p=.715). In addition, although they significantly differ in education, the difference is substantively small, Basescu's supporters having attended on average 1.020 years of schooling more than Geoana's. The only indicator where the difference is clear-cut is age, the former being one average over 4.669 years older than the latter. The pattern is also noticeable when the effect of the type of settlement is analyzed in relation with candidate choice. It appears that Geoana and Basescu win quite easily in rural areas, the two candidates obtaining 45% and, respectively, 42%. Antonescu, on the other hand, is still the least preferred of the candidates in urban areas, but in this case, he manages to at least get closer to the two main contenders, gathering 29% of the votes. This result is hardly surprising since, as previously stated, Antonescu is the candidate of the younger, richer and better educated segment.

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Table 10 Candidate Supporters: Socio-Demographic Differences (Tukey's Post-Hoc Test)

Dependent Variable	(I) Candidate	(J) candidate	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Household income	1	2	-2.20195*	.58705	.001	-3.7146	-.6893
		3	-.51984	.49150	.715	-1.7863	.7466
		4	-1.78868	.78023	.101	-3.7991	.2218
	2	1	2.20195*	.58705	.001	.6893	3.7146
		3	1.68211*	.58705	.022	.1694	3.1948
		4	.41326	.84369	.961	-1.7607	2.5873
	3	1	.51984	.49150	.715	-.7466	1.7863
		2	-1.68211*	.58705	.022	-3.1948	-.1694
		4	-1.26884	.78023	.365	-3.2793	.7416
	4	1	1.78868	.78023	.101	-.2218	3.7991
		2	-.41326	.84369	.961	-2.5873	1.7607
		3	1.26884	.78023	.365	-.7416	3.2793
w1yrsschool	1	2	-2.350*	.404	.000	-3.39	-1.31
		3	-1.020*	.342	.016	-1.90	-.14
		4	-1.922*	.538	.002	-3.31	-.54
	2	1	2.350*	.404	.000	1.31	3.39
		3	1.329*	.401	.005	.30	2.36
		4	.428	.577	.880	-1.06	1.91
	3	1	1.020*	.342	.016	.14	1.90
		2	-1.329*	.401	.005	-2.36	-.30
		4	-.902	.535	.333	-2.28	.48
	4	1	1.922*	.538	.002	.54	3.31
		2	-.428	.577	.880	-1.91	1.06
		3	.902	.535	.333	-.48	2.28
Age	1	2	4.148	1.716	.075	-.27	8.57
		3	4.669*	1.454	.008	.93	8.41
		4	9.711*	2.283	.000	3.83	15.59
	2	1	-4.148	1.716	.075	-8.57	.27
		3	.521	1.703	.990	-3.86	4.91
		4	5.563	2.450	.106	-.75	11.87
	3	1	-4.669*	1.454	.008	-8.41	-.93
		2	-.521	1.703	.990	-4.91	3.86
		4	5.042	2.273	.119	-.81	10.90
	4	1	-9.711*	2.283	.000	-15.59	-3.83
		2	-5.563	2.450	.106	-11.87	.75
		3	-5.042	2.273	.119	-10.90	.81

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level. 1=Geoana, 2=Antonescu, 3=Basescu

Table 11 Candidate Supporters: Socio-Demographic Differences (2)

			Candidate			Total
			Geoana	Antonescu	Basescu	
Urban	No	Count	150	43	140	333
		% within *Urban*	45.0%	12.9%	42.0%	100.0%
		% within *Candidate*	51.2%	25.0%	44.9%	42.9%
	Yes	Count	143	129	172	444
		% within *Urban*	32.2%	29.1%	38.7%	100.0%
		% within *Candidate*	48.8%	75.0%	55.1%	57.1%
Total		Count	293	172	312	777
		% within *Urban*	37.7%	22.1%	40.2%	100.0%
		% within *Candidate*	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Chi-Square (Sig.)						**31.229 (.000)**

However, the same cannot be stated when we compare the supporters of Antonescu, the liberal candidate, with the others'. Antonescu's supporters are substantively and statistically significantly richer and more educated than the others. In addition, they are also significantly younger than Geoana's supporters, by an average of 4.148 years. Still, when comparing them to Basescu's supporters, the difference is not significant.

Therefore, it is suggested that, with a few dimensions where two of the three candidates overlap, each of them has his own well-defined electorate. So far, one cannot draw a definitive conclusion regarding which of them would benefit from full turnout. However, just by looking at these results, it appears that Geoana's voters are the closest to the socio-demographic profile of non-voters. However, only a more detailed analysis can get us closer to the actual state of facts.

4.2.3 First Round Results

However, just identifying some differences in the electorates of the three main candidates by analyzing separately the impact of socio-demographic variables is not nearly enough for the main goal of this study. The next step to take is to identify a model that predicts candidate

choice, in order to compute the probability of voting for each candidate for each of the non-voters. Thus, I computed a multinomial logistic model that predicts candidate choice in the first round along the lines of several variables. I included demographics like household income, age, years of schooling and the type of settlement where the respondent lives, but also a few attitudinal variables, and obtained the model depicted in Table 12.

Table 12 First Round: Candidate Choice Logistic Model

Candidate	Variable	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Geoana	Intercept	-11.182	.002	
	Household income	.011	.717	1.011
	Age	.016	.537	1.016
	Rural	-.802	.369	.448
	Years of schooling	.033	.804	1.034
	Like Geoana	.659	.000	1.933
	Like Antonescu	-.034	.828	.966
	Like Basescu	-.618	.001	.539
	Evaluation of Basescu's performance as president	3.810	.000	45.141
	Would vote PSD	1.876	.315	6.524
	Would vote PNL	4.071	.008	58.612
	Would vote PDL	.951	.539	2.589
Antonescu	Intercept	-10.574	.004	
	Household income	-.004	.880	.996
	Age	-.002	.930	.998
	Rural	-3.173	.006	.042
	Years of schooling	.136	.306	1.145
	Like Geoana	.283	.108	1.327
	Like Antonescu	.518	.009	1.679
	Like Basescu	-.528	.004	.590
	Evaluation of Basescu's performance as president	3.269	.001	26.279
	Rural	-3.173	.006	.042
	Would vote PSD	4.455	.015	86.038
	Would vote PNL	1.271	.430	3.564
	Would vote PDL	-.074	.962	.928
Pearson (Sig.)		568.733 (1.000)		
Deviance (Sig.)		142.674 (1.000)		
Nagelkerke R^2		.935		

The variables included are by no means counterintuitive. I use items that specifically refer to the respondents' approval rates for the candidates mewsured on 0-10 scales and, a question asking respondents to assess the performance of the incumbent president (Basescu) on a 1-4 scale

(where 1 means 'a very good job' and 4 means 'a very bad job') and the respondents' self-declared party of choice if Parliamentary elections were to be held.

One criticism that could be raised against the model that I use is that it is possible that some of the explanatory variables that I use are correlated. Naturally, the degree of sympathy for the incumbent is likely to be negatively correlated with the degree of sympathy for his main opponent in the election. However, my choice can easily be defended if I restate the goal I have in mind when I compute this predictive model.

Briefly put, it is a known fact that, if a regression model encounters the issue of multicollinearity, the p-levels will be biased, some variables being identified as statistically insignificant even though they could have an effect if the variable with which they are correlated were excluded from the model. Nevertheless, my goal here is not to identify the magnitude of the effect of individual variables, say the respondent's sympathy for Antonescu, on one's probability to vote for that candidate. On the contrary, what I was looking for was a model that predicts candidate choice as accurately as possible and that fits well on the whole. For these reasons, since the model has a good predictive power, all variables, including those who are not significant at the 0.1 level, are included in the equation that generates the expected probability of voting for one candidate.

Similarly, the issue of endogeneity, pointed out by Tóka and Popescu (2008), is not of high relevance in this context. Although socio-demographic variables are indeed undoubtedly exogenous and would most likely have provided me with a larger sample, including only them would have had little explanatory power. In addition, it is not relevant in this situation whether or not a respondent's declared sympathy for one candidate is influenced by other variables included

in the model, nor is the direction of the causality important. Whether or not a respondent declares he has a high degree of sympathy for his candidate of choice simply because he has decided to vote for him is a matter worthy of debate, but not if one has in mind the goal which I have established for myself in this study. On the contrary, regardless of the direction, the sympathy for one candidate is a good indicator of the probability to vote for him.

The next step, naturally, was generating three separate variables for each respondent coded as non-voter, using the regression coefficients to compute their probability to vote for Geoana, Antonescu and, respectively Basescu. Next, the probabilities were averaged and the results were bootstrapped, by selecting 50% of the sample and averaging the selected values in 1000 iterations. The results, comparing the results of the voters, the non-voters and the actual election results, are displayed in the table below.

Table 13 First Round: Simulated Results

	Voters[6]	Non-voters[7]	Election outcome	Simulated outcome
Geoana	37.70% (1.8%) 95%CI [34.1, 41.1]	48.56% (3.30%) 95% CI [42.86, 53.82]	37.26%	41.28% 95% CI [36.99, 45.29]
Antonescu	22.10% (1.5%) 95% CI [19.2, 25.2]	17.17% (1.91%) 95%CI [14.24, 20.42]	23.94%	20.47% [17.56, 23.62]
Basescu	40.20%(1.8%) 95% CI [36.6, 44.0]	34.27 (3.40%) 95%CI [28.89, 39.97]	38.80%	38.24% 95% CI [34.05, 42.67]

Apparently, the voters' results match the actual election results quite well, the differences being remarkably small. However, it seems that, when it comes to the non-voters, Geoana appears to win the votes of the non-voters by a margin large enough to make it statistically significant. This

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[6] Bootstrapped S.E. in brackets
[7] Bootstrapped S.E. in brackets

finding is by no means surprising and fits the claims in the literature, where it is argued that leftist parties and candidates would be advantaged if more people went to vote. However, when I aggregate the percentages, the results are inconclusive. Geoana seems to gain a few extra percentage points – enough to overtake Basescu – but unfortunately the confidence intervals overlap, and thus I cannot conclude that full turnout would have changed the election outcome. On the contrary, the only thing that can be claimed is that Antonescu would not have qualified to the second round but, on the contrary, would possibly have lost a few percentage points.

4.2.4 Second round results

Next, I turn my attention to the results of the second round of the elections. The procedure is similar to the one in the first round: I include socio-demographic and attitudinal variables. Besides the socio-demographics, the evaluation of Basescu's performance and the party of choice, I include the prospective evaluation of the economy in case each of the candidates becomes president. The main reason why candidate sympathy scores are excluded is the fact that those questions are only asked in the first and third wave of the panel, while the second does not feature such items. Consequently, the only available sympathy scores are gathered some time before the second round of the elections was held – and thus could have been altered by subsequent events – and after the second round – when they could have been altered by the controversy regarding the fraud allegations that followed the public release of the election results. On the contrary, the variables I use, although gathered in the first wave, seem likely to be less volatile. The logistic regression results (depicting the odds of voting for Geoana over Basescu) are displayed in the table below.

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Table 14 Second round: Candidate Choice Logistic Model (Success=Geoana)

Variable	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Household income	.012	.337	1.013
Age	.013	.226	1.013
Years of schooling	-.032	.518	.968
Rural	-.051	.882	.950
Evaluation of Basescu's performance as president	2.545	.000	12.747
Expected economic performance: Geoana	-.777	.001	.460
Expected economic performance: Antonescu	-.157	.518	.855
Expected economic performance: Basescu	.342	.068	1.408
Would vote PSD	.892	.077	2.441
Would vote PNL	1.303	.007	3.679
Would vote PDL	-.828	.106	.437
Constant	-5.320	.000	.005
Hosmer and Lemeshow (Sig.)			9.272 (.320)
Percentage correct			88
Nagelkerke R^2			.749

The next step, naturally, is computing the probabilities and averaging them in order to estimate vote shares. I finally compute the election outcome among non-voters and the simulated election outcome. Unfortunately, in this case, the results are, in a way, less clear-cut than in the previous one. The first thing that strikes is the fact that, apparently, the respondents coded as voters fail to replicate the results of the actual election[8]. Why this situation occurs is only a matter of speculation, unfortunately. The most obvious culprit could be considered to be defective data gathering; however, the same sample was used to compute the results of the first round, the only

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[8] The same applies with the untrimmed variable, the percentages being almost identical.

amendment being the fact that these results were obtained using only data from the third wave of the panel, conducted after the second round of the election took place. However, the response rate in the third wave was pretty high, so this possibility does not seem highly likely. The most plausible explanation, albeit just a wild guess, seems to me the atypical circumstance which was encountered during the second round of the election.

Table 15 Second Round: Simulated Results

	Voters[9]	Non-voters[10]	Election outcome	Simulated outcome
Geoana	53.5% (1.6%) 95% CI [50.4, 56.7]	56.32% (3.59%) 95% CI [50.56, 62.18]	49.66%	54.31% 95% CI [50.44, 58.28]
Basescu	46.5% (1.6%) 95% CI [43.3, 49.6]	43.68% (3.59%) 95% CI [37.82, 49.44]	50.33%	45.68 95% CI [41.71, 49.55]

Thus, as it can be seen from the official results depicted in the table, the election was a very close one. In addition, the vast majority of the exit polls that were made public after the polling stations were closed suggested that the winner was actually Geoana, who most likely went to bed that night thinking he would be president, only to wake up the next morning as the loser of a very contested election. What followed were virulent allegations of fraud echoed violently in the highly partisan anti-Basescu press, which were seconded by challenging the election results at the Constitutional Court. Although the results confirmed the incumbent's victory, the fraud allegations continued to be present in the press coverage, contributing to the general uncertainty regarding who the rightful winner of the election had been.

For this reason, it is tenable to argue that some part of the respondents, probably among the ones with a weaker preference for Basescu, claimed to have voted for the apparently more desirable

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[9] Bootstrapped S.E. in brackets
[10] Bootstrapped S.E. in brackets

Geoana, not wanting to admit to have contributed to the unjust victory of the incumbent. One should keep in mind that the poll was conducted just a few days after the election was held, in the heat of the debate, and thus it is plausible to assert that respondents were unable to assess the situation using reason and not emotion.

However, all this is mere speculation and does not in any way make the results of my analysis any more reliable. It appears that Geoana would have had a clear-cut victory over Basescu in the second round if turnout were full, a finding which confirms the theory. However, since the data does not seem to predict the actual election turnout, these results should be taken with a certain degree of doubt.

4.2.5 A Final Word

It seems thus that full turnout would not have caused major changes in the election outcome. Although the data used to predict candidate choice in the second round of the elections may be biased, the first round results suggest that the order of the two candidates that qualified in the runoff could have changed, but the difference is not statistically significant. When it comes to the third candidate, however, the probability for him to have made it to the second round is minimal.

Therefore, the conclusions of this study are mixed. However, what can be claimed without too high of a doubt is that, even if all eligible voters had made it to the polling stations on Election Day, the winners of the first round would have still been Basescu and Geoana, but possibly not I the same order. Nevertheless, what is relevant to these findings is the conclusion we can draw related to the possible effectiveness of compulsory voting. Thus, it is hinted that voters do not fully and accurately represent the preferences of the whole electorate. In the first round, the abstainers would have sent the same two candidates to the runoff, but not in the same order, the

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difference being statistically significant and, although the overall simulated outcome does not display statistically significant differences, it could be argued that, in a slightly different situation, the non-voters preferences would have made a difference.

Discussion

The main goals of this study have been to assess the justifiability of compulsory voting in consequentialist terms, assessing whether or not the high turnout it would produce would generate changes to election outcomes. I started by comparing voters and non-voters in terms of socio-demographic characteristics and political attitudes. Next, I moved on to actual party choice, first by computing socio-demographic profiles for the voters of each candidate and then I identified a model predicting the non-voters' probable candidate choice, based on socio-demographic and attitudinal variables. Finally, I simulated each candidate's vote shares among the non-voters. The results are not clear-cut, but they do suggest that increasing turnout would have some effects, albeit small, on election outcomes. In addition, the finding that, in the first round, the voters' ranking of the first two candidates does not match the non-voters' is a further argument in favor of compulsory voting, although the overall outcome probably would have been the same.

To begin with, some differences were identified between voters and non-voters. The former are richer and better educated, but surprising significant differences were identified between rural and urban respondents, suggesting that the former are more likely to vote than the latter. This occurrence can be explained by a more effective party mobilization on local level in rural areas, where elected officials have more influence on their constituencies. However, this is but a mere speculation and a more in-depth analysis of this issue was not among the goals of the present study. In addition, I looked at the impact of some attitudinal variables, attempting to better predict one's probability to vote. It turned out that, as expected, one's interest and engagement in politics are good predictors of the probability to vote, the non-voters being rather disengaged with politics.

Next, I focused on democratic attitudes, assessing whether or not, as some claim, current non-voters would be a threat to democracy, as they harbor more authoritarian views voters. The results show that, in the vast majority of cases, the differences between voters and non-voters are not significant, and therefore compelling the latter to vote would not contribute to the success of authoritarian parties.

Finally, I focused on candidate choice, computing a model that predicted candidate choice based on socio-demographic and attitudinal variables. Next, probabilities to vote each candidate were computed, assessing whether or not the winners would have changed if turnout were full. The first round results do not appear to change, as the non-voters would have sent the same two candidates to the runoff. However, although Antonescu would not have made it to the runoff in any situation, the ranks of the first two candidates are switched when only non-voters' preferences are analyzed, suggesting that voters are not a representative sample of the electorate.

What can be concluded from these results is the fact that, although voters and non-voters have certain different characteristics, it is highly likely that not much would change in terms of election outcomes if turnout were higher. However, since the non-voters have different candidate preferences, it can be argued that situations when election outcomes would be altered by full turnout could exist. Therefore, if full representation of the electorate's preferences is one of the goals of democracy, compulsory voting could be a viable solution to the problems caused by low turnout.

However, these findings are not flawless, as several weaknesses can be identified in the present study. To begin with, some technical issues that are inherent to any study that uses survey data, and I can only limit myself to acknowledging them and thus casting a shadow of doubt on my

findings. Firstly, the survey data does not seem to accurately predict election results in the second round, and thus these findings are difficult to interpret. Secondly, the several cases with missing data are excluded from the analysis and, since we cannot simply assume that they are a random sample of the population, it is possible that there is some amount of bias in the parameters identified.

Then, the limitations in scope should be acknowledged, not only as weaknesses, but as possible hints to future research. Firstly, I only assess the impact of compulsory voting's main effect, namely increased turnout. However, what I do not and could not assess is whether or not it would raise the amount of spoiled ballots, mainly a manifestation of citizens' rejection of the candidate pool and of being compelled to vote when they do not want to.

Secondly, I cannot compute a theoretically justifiable model that predicts people's probability to vote under compulsory rules. Even when voting is compulsory, turnout is never full, and there are no theoretical justifications to applying to the Romanian case any of the patterns that could emerge when analyzing abstainer profiles in democracies where voting is compulsory. Thus, I assume full turnout, although this assumption is far from what the reality would certainly be.

 In addition, I did not test whether or not the non-voters candidate choices are coherent with their policy preferences to the same extent as voters, and answering this research question could lead to the identification of further arguments for or against compulsory voting.

Finally, and most important, I cannot assess the impact that compulsory voting would have on the politicians campaign strategies if they had to appeal to a larger and possibly different electorate. It is possible that, even with compulsory voting, election outcomes in terms of vote

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shares stay the same, but the candidates adapt to the new situation and embrace different policies, in order to appeal to the new voters.

Nevertheless, even after acknowledging these weaknesses, my study does shed some new light on the issue of compulsory voting and turnout effects on election outcomes. Even though I do not find definitive proof that the winner of the election would have been different, I find that voters and non-voters do not have the same preferences. Therefore, if accurate representation of voter preferences is a goal in itself, compulsory voting should be implemented.

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